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IDOT, Illinois Secretary of State, AAA Launch National Child Safety Week in Illinois

Statewide effort to ensure proper restraints and save lives

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), the Illinois Secretary of State and AAA today launched the 2015 National Child Passenger Safety Week in Illinois. The annual safety campaign brings attention to the importance of properly securing all children in car seats, booster seats and seat belts.

“Safety of the motoring public, especially children, is a top priority here at IDOT,” said Illinois Transportation Secretary Randy Blankenhorn. “Making sure your child is in the right seat is an important responsibility that all parents need to take seriously.”

The focus of this year’s campaign is increasing awareness of the need to keep children in booster seats until they reach the appropriate height (4 feet 9 inches) to properly fit in a lap and shoulder belt. Too often, parents move their children to seat belts before they have matured enough to ride safely without a booster seat, though studies show that injuries and death occur more often in crashes in which children are not restrained in a booster seat.

Illinois law requires that all children eight years old and younger ride in a car or booster seat, regardless of their height. Data compiled by IDOT show that only 54.7 percent of car seats are being used correctly.

Parents should ask the following questions to determine if their 8-year-old children are ready to be out of booster seats. If the answer to any of these questions is no, then they should remain in a booster seat.

- Can they sit all the way back against the vehicle seat?
- Do their knees bend comfortably at the edge of the vehicle seat?
- Does the seat belt cross their shoulder between the neck and arm?
- Is the lap belt as low as possible, touching their thighs?
- Can they stay seated like this for the whole trip?

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“Many parents and caregivers don’t use booster seats long enough and risk injury to the child,” said Secretary of State Jesse White. “Let’s keep our children safe by making sure they are properly secured in the appropriate car seats. Also set a good example by using your safety belt.”

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death for children younger than 13 years old. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) crash statistics show that, on average, nearly two children under the age of 13 were killed and 345 injured each day while riding in cars, SUVs, pickup trucks and vans in 2013.

“As we recognize Child Passenger Safety Week, it’s a timely reminder to be sure children are safe and secure in the right seat for them,” said Alicia Lyles, Regional President of AAA Chicago. “We hope families across Illinois will take advantage of the many local, free car seat inspections to ensure all children are safely buckled.”

Another partner in educating the Illinois public about the dangers of improperly used car seats is the Illinois Association of Technical Accident Investigators (IATAI). As part of their annual conference, IATAI experts crash vehicles to gather vital data to assist investigators with crash reconstruction. This year, IATAI has partnered with certified child passenger safety technicians at IDOT, AAA and the Illinois Secretary of State to install car seats in these test vehicles.

According to manufacturer instructions, caregivers are encouraged to follow the recommendation from NHTSA and the American Academy of Pediatrics to keep children in their specific restraint types for as long as possible. For maximum safety, have the car seat inspected by a certified child passenger safety technician to ensure children are in the proper seats and register car seats to receive any recall updates from the manufacturer. Additional guidelines:

1. **Rear-facing seats:** In the back seat from birth, to the height and weight limit of the seat. Recommended up to age 2, but at a minimum of age one and 20 pounds.
2. **Forward-facing seats:** In the back seat when the child has reached the height or weight limit of the rear-facing seat, to about age four and 40-65 pounds.
3. **Booster seats:** In the back seat from about age 4 to at least age 8.
4. **Seat belts:** At age 8 and older and taller than 4 feet, 9 inches.

All children, age 12 or younger, should ride in the back seat. As of Jan. 1, 2012, seat belt use is required in all seating positions, regardless of age.

For more information on child passenger safety and on statewide seat checks scheduled for Sept.19, visit www.buckleupillinois.org.

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